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As I noted at the outset, there are controversies about all these matters in the Community, and I want to synthesize an alternative school of thought that has emerged in several of the agencies. Because arguments are currently proceeding within and among the Community's agencies, it would be premature to identify these views with a specific agency.

The alternative view holds that, despite absence of evidence on the ground of Soviet military policy change, the debates we are observing within the Soviet elite may portend important shifts to come. According to this school, there is an emerging Soviet consensus for change that comes from an overlapping of Gorbachev's economic and political agenda urging constraints on defense spending and the agenda of important military leaders, including Marshal Ogarkov, who want a shift of emphasis to hi-tech modernization of the conventional forces. Under such a consensus, arms control would be seen as a tool to constrain the military burden in the medium term, while the economy is being revived, and to achieve stabilization of the competition in nuclear forces of all kinds where prospects for attaining decisive advantages no longer appear compelling. One attempt to pull all this together is found in CIA/SOVA report... All the issues raised are being debated by the Community in the development of national estimates on Soviet nuclear and general purpose forces.

The implications of this alternative view for Western security, even if it is borne out, are uncertain. It could result in a more benign Soviet military posture based on reduced spending, sharp deemphasis on the quest for advantage in nuclear capability, and significantly reduced (albeit modernized) conventional forces, all facilitated by arms control agreement. Another result, however, could be a more formidable Soviet military challenge in the mid-to-late 1990s arising from modernized Soviet conventional forces and erosion of the credibility of NATO's nuclear escalation options. The Soviets could see arms control as serving these aims as well. Key variables in determining which results emerged from this dynamic would be, first, what the Soviet leadership actually aims for; second, how well Gorbachev does in reviving the economy to support military modernization; and, perhaps most importantly, third, how the US and NATO do in sustaining their force postures and the credibility of their strategies in the environment of improved East-West relations.

In brief testimony it is impossible to do full justice to the complexity of the debate we are having about the debates the Soviets are having. I mention it for two reasons: First, to fairly portray the state of Community thinking; and second, to assure you that we are attentive to the possibilities for change in Soviet military policy at a time when almost every aspect of life in the USSR is coming under critical scrutiny there.